

00368

1961/03/15

~~SECRET~~



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

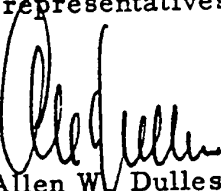
15 March 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Brig. General Chester V. Clifton, Jr.
Military Aide to the President
The White House

In response to your telephonic request of 14 March I attach a memorandum summarizing the results of the initial talks on March 9 and 10 between General Phoumi and Souvanna Phouma.

As soon as the information is available, I will send you a similar report on the follow-up talks now going on at Phnom Penh between the delegation sent there by General Phoumi and Souvanna Phouma and his representatives.


Allen W. Dulles
Director

Attachment

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12356, SEC. 3.4

~~SECRET~~

1d

Approved For Release 1999/10/11 : NLK-01-130-7-2-9 14 MAR 1961

MEMORANDUM ON MEETING OF GENERAL PHOUMI AND
SOUVANNA PHOUMA IN PHNOM PENH, 9-10 MARCH 1961

1. The Boun Oum government's earliest serious thinking on making an overture to Souvanna Phouma was in early February when General Phoumi recommended that the government should announce its readiness to negotiate with its "enemies and rivals—even Souvanna Phouma." On 14 February, the Laotian government announced that it was considering sending General Phoumi to Cambodia to discuss Souvanna's "possible return" to Vientiane. Phoumi's plans to go to Phnom Penh were side-tracked by the Cambodian government's notification that it could not receive him officially; this was shortly followed by Souvanna's departure on 21 February for his 8-day visit with supporters in northern Laos. Prior to Souvanna's departure, he told [REDACTED] that, while he would be willing to receive General Phoumi, he would under no circumstances serve in any government with Boun Oum. Souvanna reiterated his preference for a government of national reconciliation which would include the Pathet Lao, but indicated he would accept as an alternative a non-political government headed by the king which would be charged with preparing new elections.

2. On Souvanna's return to Phnom Penh on 1 March, he announced his readiness to receive a Vientiane delegation. Vientiane, meanwhile, had been able to overcome Cambodia's

SANITIZED

NLY-86-206

~~SECRET~~

MAR 7 1961
NARA DATE 4/88

No additional material released
as a result of this review.

Approved For Release 1999/10/11 : NLK-01-130-7-2-9

~~SECRET~~

Approved For Release 1999/10/11 : NLK-01-130-7-2-9 1 4 MAR 1961

earlier misunderstanding on the purpose of a visit, and arrangements were finalized for Phoumi's arrival in Phnom Penh on 9 March.

3. Phoumi and several aides arrived in Phnom Penh on 9 March and had one session with Souvanna that afternoon. A second meeting took place on 10 March. Souvanna opened the talks on 9 March by arguing for an immediate conference among himself, Phoumi and Pathet Lao chief Prince Souphanouvong (Souvanna's half-brother). Phoumi countered that the Vientiane government felt that the best way to bring about a reconciliation of all purely nationalist elements in Laos was to bring together national and non-Communist elements, and then to deal with others.

4. Phoumi told Souvanna during the 9 March meeting the Laotian government was anxious to have Souvanna return to Vientiane and would be glad to have him in a new government as deputy prime minister and foreign affairs minister, or minister of public works, with Boun Oum as prime minister. Such a government would include other associates of Souvanna and representatives of other important groups in the country, such as former prime minister Phoui. An alternative would be to have a government along these lines with both Boun Oum and Souvanna as deputy prime ministers under the leadership of King Savang. Souvanna observed that the latter alternative

- 2 -

~~SECRET~~

Approved For Release 1999/10/11 : NLK-01-130-7-2-9

might be the best solution. Phoumi told Souvanna that he was the man best qualified to bring about a reconciliation between conflicting forces in Laos and asked him to return to Vientiane as mediator. Souvanna turned down this request with the argument that if he returned, he would immediately lose his influence with the "other side" and stated he could be more useful in Phnom Penh where he could maintain contact with both sides.

5. Souvanna told Phoumi he had interpreted King Savang's call for a Neutral Nations Commission (NNC)--consisting of Burma, Cambodia, and Malaya--in the same manner as had Cambodia, i.e., as being in opposition to Prince Sihanouk's 1 January proposal for a 14-nation international conference. After hearing Phoumi's explanation that Vientiane conceived of the NNC as making its report and recommendations to an international group which would be able to guarantee the neutrality and independence of Laos, Souvanna stated he felt the NNC was a better idea than the International Control Commission (India, Poland and Canada) and he would now try to persuade Sihanouk to accept the NNC chairmanship. The conferees agreed that the task of the NNC would be to stop the inflow of Soviet arms and to reduce the flow of arms to the Laotian army (presumably to the level normal for a peacetime army). Phoumi understood Souvanna to have agreed that the NNC

- 3 -

~~SECRET~~

would subsequently report to an international conference, such as Sihanouk's proposed 14-power group, but Souvanna later told the press that he believed the conference should be established at "about the same time" so that the conference could give directives to the NNC.

6. Phoumi states that Souvanna himself was alarmed at the extent of the Soviet buildup in the Plaine des Jarres area and said he did not want North Vietnamese in Laos any more than did Phoumi. Souvanna, according to Phoumi, did not specifically suggest the ending of American aid to the Laotian army, nor object to it as such, but did severely criticize former prime minister Phoui for having agreed to US military training teams in Laos.

7. In the 10 March meeting Phoumi presented a draft communique to Souvanna that was largely adopted. The communique stated that the two parties mutually desire a policy of strict neutrality for Laos as the basis for "retrieving peace and national concord" and "strongly condemn foreign interferences." It asserted that in order to "retrieve a climate of reciprocal confidence with a view to national reconciliation" it is necessary first that foreign interferences cease; this prospect is not possible except with the aid of an impartial international commission. (Souvanna later told the press he understood this to be the NNC as proposed by the king, but that perhaps it would be good to replace Malaya with India.)

- 4 -

~~SECRET~~

8. The communique noted Phoumi's view of Souvanna as "the sole Lao statesman who can serve as a link with the Neo Lao Hak Sat (political arm of the Pathet Lao) with a view to national reconciliation." Souvanna assured him he will do all he can to achieve this reconciliation but declined an invitation to return immediately to Vientiane.

9. The communique also stated that Phoumi accepts the principle of a meeting in Phnom Penh, suggested by Souvanna, of representatives of "the three groups whose forces presently are fighting each other in Laos" (i.e., the Vientiane government, Souvanna, and the Pathet Lao) which, however, "cannot take place until after cessation of foreign interferences." Finally, both parties considered this meeting as a preliminary contact and decided to consult with each other as often as possible. The meeting now taking place in Phnom Penh between Vientiane representatives and Souvanna is the first follow-up of this declaration.

~~SECRET~~